Townlands C of E Primary Academy

Assessing and Managing Risks for Children Who Present Challenging Behaviours

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Contents

1 What is meant by risk and risk assessment

2 Assessing risk

3 Risk reduction

4 Risk management measures

5 An agreed approach

6 Staff training

7 Evaluation

1 What is meant by "risk" and "risk assessment"?

A risk assessment is a careful examination of how children or adults could be harmed from a particular activity or situation. The assessment helps to identify the likelihood of harm and whether adequate precautions have been taken or if further control measures should be introduced to reduce the risk of harm to as low a level as possible.

Risks may arise in relation to a number of factors, such as the health care and social support arrangements for the child; interactions between the child and his or her environment; the direct impact of behaviour(s) presented by the child; measures and interventions employed to reduce, limit or manage the risks presented to the child and others. Risk assessment and management is a process that helps staff and others to consider risk issues, to act reasonably, and to learn from what happens in everyday practice. In the main, risk assessment and management involves:

- Using what is known, in the light of experience, to make rational judgements about risk issues.
- Weighing up options and taking reasonable risks.
- Taking action to implement a range of approaches to support and safeguard children. By working in this way, it is possible to make decisions and take actions to:
    - Limit the level of inherent risk to which children and others are exposed
    - Take calculated risks to broaden the child's experience and maximise his or her individual potential
    - Avoid unreasonable risks for this child and others
    - Ensure that strategies used to respond to challenging behaviour are reasonable and proportionate to the risks presented by the behaviour.

Our risk assessment and management strategy will help staff to make decisions about what can reasonably be done to limit risks. At the same time, it will help prepare them for times when things go wrong. Challenging behaviours may be difficult to predict in terms of exactly when they will occur or the degree of challenge they will pose. As a general rule, as part of this process when writing a risk assessment, we will endeavour to:

• Explore why children behave in ways that pose a risk
• Try to understand the factors that influence the behaviour
• Recognise the early warning signs that indicate that the child's behaviour is beginning to emerge
• Develop the skills to manage difficult situations competently and sensitively

The measures agreed for managing identified risks should be set out in an agreed behaviour management plan & IEP for the individual child. Risk assessment and management can also be used in emergency situations when unforeseen risks occur.

2 Assessing Risk

Risk assessment involves a consideration of potential and actual risk. Key steps are:

• Assessing the context for risk - trying to predict the situations in which risks do/may occur. For example, situations where pupils might feel frustrated, pupils being near open roads, on transport or in crowded places.

• Assessing probability - trying to estimate how likely it is that the risk situation will occur and whether any injury or harm is very likely to occur, likely to occur, or unlikely to occur.

• Assessing seriousness - trying to gauge the kind of injury and harm that could result. For example: choking, bruises, bleeding, sprains, broken bones, stress, anxiety etc.

When assessed, all risks should be recorded in accordance with relevant school policies.

3 Risk Reduction

Risk reduction involves an examination of risk management options and consideration of the benefits and drawbacks of each option for the child, staff and others concerned. A record should be kept of risk reduction options examined and discounted as well as those adopted for each pupil. Risk reduction should include:

- Proactive measures to support the child effectively and prevent difficulties emerging.
- Early interventions to help the child in difficult situations and avert problems.
- Planned measures to manage the child and others safely, when unavoidable difficulties arise.

In circumstances where there are concerns that the risk reduction options being considered may themselves give rise to risk to the pupil or others, the school will seek further advice from other bodies. These may include:

- Medical advisers
- The LA education and/or social services

4 Risk Management Measures

The measures selected to prevent risks occurring, manage risks that arise and respond to injuries and harm that occur should be based upon a full appraisal of all the risk management options. In agreeing the risk management strategy, it is important to be explicit about inherent risks that

- continue to exist, even when the strategy is fully implemented
- can be reduced by implementing the strategy
- can be prevented by implementing the strategy
- are inherent in the strategy.

The agreed risk management measures should form the basis of the child's behaviour management plan and the school's risk management strategy. All decisions made about risk management options should be recorded in accordance with school procedures. When selecting risk management procedures for the child's behaviour management plan and the school risk management strategy, the school will involve parents, or those with parental responsibility. Parents will be given information relating to the measures used for supporting their child within a broader context.

If there are disputes or concerns about the measures employed, it would be prudent for the School to seek professional advice.

5 An Agreed Approach

Once agreed, the behaviour management plan and risk management strategy should be shared with all those responsible for implementing or monitoring the impact of the plan. This will help to ensure that those concerned know how children are to be supported and why, which behaviours are to be managed and how they are to be managed; and which risk reduction measures are to be employed and when. The risk management strategy can be shared through discussion groups, meetings and circulating information. Those who should be informed include:

- the child
- his/her parents or those with parental responsibility
- members of the teaching team and other school staff
- other professionals involved with the child, child protection teams and
- other agencies. Schools should keep a record of those informed about the strategy

6 Staff Training

Once the plan and risk management strategy have been shared with those who work with and support the child, consideration should be given to the ability of staff to implement the strategy. It should be determined what training may be required prior to implementation.

7 Evaluation

The School will regularly review risk assessment and management measures. All evaluations of plans and strategies should be reported using school procedures and recorded in school records. These will make an important contribution to informing future planning and improving day-to-day practice.